

Jukebox Hero by edgy_fluffball

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: 80's Music, Babysitter Steve Harrington, Billy Hargrove Needs Love, Billy Hargrove Redemption, Cute Ending, Dancing, First Kiss, Fluff and Angst, Foreigner, Journey, Late Night Conversations, Light Angst, M/M, Mild Hurt/Comfort, POV Changes, Slow Dancing, Steve Has PTSD, diner, fighting demodogs

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Summary:

In a town without a name, in a heavy downpour, there is a diner where lost souls come in late at night.

There is a jukebox, far in the back, and there are two late night customers who surprise each other.

They are strangers, to a certain degree. They are intrigued, however, to see, and feel, and learn.

Jukebox Hero

Author's Note:

The songs mentioned in this thing are
Foreigner - Jukebox Hero
and
Journey - Faithfully, if someone wants to listen to
them.

Steve slammed the car door shut. His feet, previously the only part of his body that had remained dry, were soaked after he stepped into a deep puddle whilst getting out of the car. Cursing, he pulled his jacket over his head and crossed the parking lot with bounding strides. The diner's harsh neon lights cast their reflections on the wet asphalt, he pulled the door open and shuddered. Water droplets flew from his hair and ran down the glass door at the front.

He had not planned for his day to end like this. After school, all he wanted to do was go home and work on his schoolwork. He had not expected six kids to crawl into his car before he could even start it up.

'We need to leave, right now,' Dustin had screamed, 'Nancy and Jonathan left without us, and we are positive there was a sighting!'

What followed was a monster hunt, starting out with a lonely Demodog roaming the woods. Jane had not yet been able to find the new breach which meant that they had been on high alert the whole time. As it turned out, there was more than one Demodog, each group of their party had faced a few – leading to Steve having to make use of the bat. It now rested in the back of his car, nails roughly cleaned, blood and goo wiped off with the paper towels he kept in the glove box for this exact reason. Steve felt himself shudder as the memory of the earlier encounter returned to his immediate consciousness. He had to talk to Dustin and Mike about running into dangerous situations, again. It seemed like his last stern talk, about how he could not be close to both of them all the time to keep their asses safe, had been of little success. He had been forced to sprint to and fro at least ten times because the shitheads had managed to get

cornered by two or more Demodogs again and again. Of course, he knew how to use the bat to full efficiency, had learned how to hit fatally as quick and swift as possible, but his arms and shoulders were sore nonetheless and his head was pounding with the blood rushing through his veins, too fast and too loud.

There was only one tired waitress behind the counter who didn't even look up when Steve entered and dragged his heavy feet towards a booth further back. She came to hand him a cup and fill it with coffee, just then granting him her attention and rising her eyebrows at him.

'There's a restroom in the back,' she nodded in the direction Steve assumed said restroom to be, 'in case you need to clean up.'

'Thank you,' Steve remembered his manners just in time and tried to nod an acknowledgement.

Hopper had talked about the place, a diner near the main road, closer to DC than Hawkins, he had said. Steve didn't know the waitress, she wasn't from Hawkins then. It made it easier for him to lean back in the booth, his back to the front door. He didn't like the feeling of being exposed like this, but turning around would mean turning his back to the wall, and what would be worse? After all, he remembered, the Demogorgon had come through the Byers' wall and his bat was in the car. On a side line, he didn't intend to go to the restroom, and facing the front door meant anyone coming in seeing his bloody and bruised face and the red tears in his clothes. Demodogs didn't joke around.

His tally had risen to thirty Demodogs in one night, every single one killed to protect one of the dipshits, Nancy or Byers, who still struggled with carrying a weapon and actually using it. His traps were ingenious, however, and helped them a lot. They required him to monitor them, which put him into danger when a Demodog spotted him crouching in some bushes and decided to try getting a bite of that particular human. In fact, Byers had been the third most saved by Steve that night, closely following Dustin and Mike who just acted plain stupid most of the time.

It was a relief for him that Jane and Max tended to stick around

Hopper, and Will never left Nancy's side ever since she had shown him how to handle a shotgun properly. Lucas, ever protective of Max, followed her, leaving him in Hopper's reach if a situation was going south. More than once, one of the kids had called him their joker, appearing in front of whoever needed his help the most, depending on the circumstances.

No one talked about him and the way they relied on him being there just in time to get them out of the mess they got themselves into. He dropped them off, one by one, after every time they went out to stop the Demodog's new attempt to gain a foothold in their world. As long as Jane couldn't track down the breach, they were limited to containing the damage.

It wasn't even that the kids were supposed to tag along. Steve emptied his cup of cold coffee and tried to remember when Hopper had given up on trying to keep them away. They had been around from the beginning, he thought, since Jane was a vital part of any mission, Hopper probably just allowed them to be there because why should one kid be there and the rest of the party be excluded? Even though that one kid had powers and the others were just children. No matter how often Steve told them, all he ever got in response was an eye roll and a 'Yah, sure Steve.'

The waitress came over, refilled his cup and returned behind the counter. Steve felt her look on his back for a moment but couldn't bring himself to care. Blood splatters on his pants, jacket, hands and face had become his new normal, Nancy had taught him how to get rid of the stains, and after that he had lost his will to care about what people thought about him running around in bloodied clothes.

Something about the empty diner made him feel at ease. There was no one around to drag him off, no code to reach him over the phone, no little shit to lecture him about the difference between 'strike' and 'attack' mid-fight. Steve still didn't see one.

The diner door opened behind him. Neither the waitress nor Steve moved to look up, one too busy reading, the other ducking his head down in an attempt to shield his head from whatever might ensue if the newcomer spotted his bloodspattered face. He settled with his chin cupped in his hand. A small trickle of blood still ran down his

temple and over his fingers, the other scratches and wounds seemed to have stopped bleeding. He took another sip of coffee, looking straight ahead, willing himself to think about anything but petal-shaped heads and high-pitched screams.

Billy slammed the car door shut. The rain hit his face immediately. Cursing, he pulled his jacket over his head and crossed the parking lot with bounding strides. The diner's harsh neon lights cast their reflections on the wet asphalt, he pulled the door open and shuddered. Water droplets flew from his hair and ran down the glass door at the front.

He had not planned for his day to end like this. After school, all he wanted to do was go home and work on his schoolwork. He had not expected his father to come into his room before dinner, demanding an answer to the one question he never knew the right response to.

‘Where is Maxine? Where is your sister?’

He never knew and it made his father angry. In his eyes, Billy's sole purpose was to track down the brat and fetch her home to keep him from the trouble it posed. According to him, it was Billy's fault if he couldn't answer the exact words he imagined Billy to say. The disappointment about this was professionally worded, leaving nothing to the imagination.

It all ended with instructions how to proceed, spiced up with his father's true opinion of Billy. If that meant driving around for hours without a concrete target, it seemed just proper for him. If it meant Max coming home before he had found here, fine. She always had a good excuse but he still stayed out.

He didn't remember whom he had overheard talking about the diner, secluded enough to avoid people from Hawkins, close enough to get there and home again without problems. There were not many customers, just one beside him. A single man sat in one of the booths further back. Billy looked over to the counter, the waitress sat on a chair and read in a dog-eared book. He didn't know her, she wasn't from Hawkins. It made it easier for him to lean back in the booth just

in front of the other customer, his back to him and the room. He didn't like the feeling of being exposed like this, but turning around would mean turning his back to the door, and what would be worse? If someone came from the back, the other man would certainly move or shift, alerting him. Billy tried to convince himself that he was facing the front door out of curiosity, but failed. Of course he wanted to see the door in case his father followed him one of these days and decided to take him home personally. He could almost hear him, asking him if he even knew what it meant for him to go out and find his irresponsible, disrespectful disappointment of a son in a diner late at night.

No, Billy sat facing the door, just in case. The waitress came over to him after he had stared at her for a good two minutes, shuffling across the room with a coffee pot and a cup, filling it, and leaving him to it with an irritated look. Billy tried to dissolve some sugar in the cold drink, not really counting on success. Bitter and cold as it was the coffee would keep him awake for as long as he needed it before returning to Hawkins eventually.

The diner fell quiet after he had set his cup back on its saucer. The humming of the machines behind the counter, the ceiling fan and the overturning of pages were the only sounds around. There was no pressure to break the silence. In the end, they were three people who shared the same room for a limited time. Billy felt at ease as it was. The silence made sure no one was talking, no one was telling him what a disappointment he was, how incapable of doing even the easiest thing. No one made him feel small in silence.

Steve hated the silence. As long as it had been just him and the reading waitress he had been able to ignore it, concentrate on the small noises instead. But now there was someone else, someone who had sat down just behind him, if his hearing had not tricked him. It made him uncomfortable. The silence bore the unknown, the uncanny, and it gave Steve the chills. In the silence his thoughts were the loudest.

What if the person wasn't a person but a Demogorgon, waiting for him to get comfortable? Maybe that was too absurd, but it could still

be some government agent who was sent to detain him because they had finally caught on to what Hopper, Nancy, Byers and he were doing. Worse than that, they might have found out about Jane, about the kids having been dragged into the whole situation.

He heard them in the silence. He heard Dustin's shrieks, Mike's breathless curses, Lucas' attempts to hide the sheer fright in his voice, Will's intermitted breathing whenever he spotted a Demodog, because after all, they still were kids and Steve hated seeing them in the woods. They tried to appear tough because if one of them started to cry, Hopper would send them all home. He really should.

Steve knew he would still be out there, help out wherever he could, keep Jonathan safe whenever he was too immersed in his traps and Nancy's shotgun was too loud to fire without attracting more company. He would still challenge Hopper about their qualification to be part of the Demodog Defence Troop, copyright by Dustin Henderson. There was a difference between him and the little shits he seemed to call friends, he was, after all, more of a grown up and stood an actual chance against a Demodog. The tally, another of Dustin's stupid ideas, had him, Hopper and Nancy at the top. It seemed like a desperate attempt to make something frightening less scary; even if it helped the kids, Steve hated it. It meant seeing how many lives he had taken, how often he had put himself into the direct line of battle and the danger that came with it.

After all the times Nancy, Hopper or the kids had called him into action, Steve could still remember every single cry and scared shout that had him run off, towards the distressed sounds. Every single one was burned into his memory, ready to creep up on him whenever the silence took over. It came with the same effects every time.

His fingers shook as he grabbed his cup, almost knocking it over because his grip wasn't tight enough. He couldn't even see it clearly because his eyes didn't seem to work all of a sudden, he tried to blink them clear but it didn't work, something seemed to make them blurry again.

He forbid himself to think about salt burning and irritating his eyes. Instead, he tried wiping at them just enough to see the back wall where the old jukebox stood next to the door to the restroom the

waitress had mentioned earlier. Anything to break the silence, something he remembered along with strawberry shakes after swimming lessons with his mother.

He got up. The waitress didn't shift on her chair, she still seemed to be preoccupied with her book. Steve was sure to find a few coins in his pocket. He scanned the songs before inserting a nickel. After a night that had him kill monsters with a spiked bat and patch up kids without even thinking about why his jacket sleeve was torn in fine, bloody strips, he wanted to hear something that reminded him of a time before the Upside Down, Demodogs and babysitter duty. He wanted a song he had listened to as King Steve, when he had been self-assured and flawless to the outside. He wanted a song that let him forget about the craziness in his life, that drowned out the pain and fear in Max' cry earlier, after a Demodog had grazed her leg with its teeth. He needed a song that let him forget her tears, the desperate attempt to cover the bite with band-aids, and her shaky voice as she tried to tell her mother that she had slipped off her skateboard, when Steve had dropped her off at home.

He needed a reminder that he had been a person before the Upside Down had swallowed him, that he had had feelings before Billy Hargrove had made him feel small and worthless and desperate. He needed a reminder that he could still remember himself, that he could let go once in a while. He chose the one song that remembered him of freshman year and nights spent on his own.

The familiar bass and drum entry cut through the silence like a blinding sword in the night cut through the darkness of failure. The fading synthesizer made him remember imagined one-man concerts in the living room.

Steve closed his eyes, standing in front of the jukebox he allowed himself to feel the beat, the rhythm of words he had learned by heart just a few years back to impress his friends with a spectacular show. He still knew the words but he willed himself not to sing, this was just for him, to calm his nerves and feel alive again. The words were still fitting, he still felt their meaning hit where it hurt.

'Good,' he thought and smiled, moving his hips to the beat, 'after all, I can still feel.'

The guitar riff came in, surging through him with all its might, leaving him trembling, the anticipation turning into relief. His hands shook again, but this time it was in time with the music, he wanted to move, pour everything into this song. If he couldn't let go of everything else, he could dance in perfect step and get lost or just a moment.

He heard one guitar, just blew him away. He had heard the song on the radio first, recording it at home and playing the tape in his room over and over again. The song had spoken to him.

So he started rockin', ain't never gonna stop, gotta keep on rockin', someday gonna make it to the top. Being King wasn't the top, Steve had taken long, almost too long, to realize that. Instead, he had taken another position. He was a guardian. Dustin had bestowed him the title of 'Fighter', making him a member of their party. With the Demodogs appearing out of the blue, he never stopped running, running toward the sound, toward the danger. He never slept through the night anymore, waiting for his walkie-talkie to crackle and someone to call out for him.

What would happen if he stopped? The kids would still go out there, no matter what he said, but then there would be no one to tackle a monster to the ground to assure their well-being. He simply could not stop.

And be a jukebox hero. Because why not. Why couldn't be a hero, throwing himself in front of the kids, and Jonathan, for that matter. He had jumped in Nancy's way once, resulting in a bite from the Demodog aiming for her, and a bruise on his ribcage that Nancy had inflicted on him with the stock of her shotgun. After that he had never again attempted to save her.

In a town without a name in a heavy downpour, thought he passed his own shadow by the backstage door. There were times that Hawkins seemed to have evolved into a trap, keeping him secure and in danger's way. But whenever Steve imagined a life away from the house he knew, the people who still asked about his childhood hobbies, and the Demodog Defence Troop, he couldn't stand the idea of what his life seemed to turn into without them. So he rocked on, nail bat in the trunk of his car and walkie-talkie under his bed.

It seemed just about right, as long as he could drown out the silence and the thoughts that came with it. He was swaying on his feet now, eyes closed and dancing without holding back. The melody filled his ears, let him forget his surroundings, the dimly lit diner, the bored waitress and her book, the other customer who was most likely a lost soul just like himself. In the space he had put himself into was nothing but moving, dancing, letting it all out and rolling his hips to the beat, hands buried in his hair, holding onto it as if he could find his lifeline in himself. Every emphasized syllable meant a cock of his hip.

He threw his head back, eyes still closed. *He'll come alive, come alive tonight.* The guitar solo had him throw around his head, thrashing, almost. It was electric, going straight into his veins with all its warmth and desperation.

There he was, dancing on his own.

He heard the other customer shift, move. He imagined him getting up, leaving. But he didn't. Instead, he heard coins clink together, one hitting metal. The sound of the jukebox coming to life filled Billy's ears. He could not imagine what he had done to insult the world to deserve the shitty music taste of a lonely fucker late at night.

And then the bass and drum came in. Billy frowned, he knew the song, it was pretty distinct, edged into his mind until the end of the world. Somebody in this diner off the road wanted to listen to Foreigner at three in the morning.

His curiosity got the better of him, he turned around in his seat, throwing a glance over his shoulder. At first he saw what he had seen when he had walked in, the back of a head and shoulders in a bomber jacket. It was only when the guy started to move, slowly, in step with the music, that Billy's look was drawn toward a feature he had not expected.

Billy hated how shallow his thoughts seemed to prove to him, but it was not earlier than the moment he took in the guy's ass, that something became very clear to him: he was staring at Steve

Harrington. Having admitted that he had just recognized him by his backside, Billy allowed himself another thought, namely, that he had only been able to recognize said backside because he stared at it in the hallway and during practice whenever he got the chance.

Steve started to sway, *dance*, as if he was alone in the room, and no one there to witness the lascivious roll of his hips. Billy tore his eyes off him, turning his head again, but the waitress over at the counter had still not looked up. He returned to staring at Harrington, whose moves were causing his breathing to stagger. He had tangled his fingers in his hair, pulling his own head back, and exposing his neck at the same time. Billy could remember the thought that had crossed his mind when he had seen Steve throw his head back laughing the first time, he had thought about how soft the pale skin would be against his teeth, how Steve would taste against his tongue. Seeing him like this, dancing on his own, lost in his own movements, let Billy forget that he was staring. Steve seemed too at ease within the song to stop doing it.

The guitar solo came on. Billy, who had tried to keep his composure, keep calm and just use the welcome chance to stare like he would never again have the possibility, was hit hard by the way Steve used the melody to hang onto it, move his hips and shake his head. Billy realized that he had never seen Steve rock out before and regretted the missed opportunities.

And then, with a courage he had not possessed in a long time, a committed, driven courage, he got up. The waitress still didn't seem to notice, or care, for that matter, and neither did Steve who was still dancing through the last chords and beats.

He's got stars in his eyes. Yes, Billy could agree with that. Whoever looked into Steve Harrington's eyes as much as once could see the stars in his eyes, the warm shimmer that had Max hooked. Billy knew it, although he had never got to experience the stars shine for him.

He stopped next to the jukebox, looking through his pockets as the song faded out. Steve was still standing there with his eyes closed, his chest rose with heavy breaths, and a small trickle of sweat rolled down his temple. Billy reached towards him, pushing the nickel into the slit, and selected the song again. When he looked back up, Steve

stared at him with wide eyes.

'I thought you liked the song,' Billy cursed his voice for sounding raspy, 'seeing you dance is...funny.'

Steve's eyes shot daggers at him. An angry wrinkle on his forehead formed and a vein on his neck started to pulse. He did not look as relaxed and at ease as he had moments before and Billy regretted his coming over for just a second. If just his presence caused Steve to look like a wild animal prepared to either run or attack, it didn't feel right.

'I saw you,' Billy realized he was rambling just to say anything while the first chords echoed through the empty diner, 'I thought you might be up for another round.'

'Do you get a kick out of this?' Steve was in his face, eyes dark and dangerous, 'Do you want to continue where we left off last time?'

Billy shook his head in surprise. He hadn't expected the night at the Byers' to come up, but then again, he had never seen Steve like this, everything about him seemed to long for a fight; he held his fist at his sides, chin stretched forward, and seemed to calculate his chances.

'I don't – I don't want to fight at all, I came in here to sit down and brood, to be honest. But now that I have seen you dance...I just came to offer joining you.'

'And I'm supposed to believe that?' Steve's voice was sharp, raised to be louder than the jukebox.

Billy shrugged, 'You can, I guess. Or don't. In that case, I will be back there.'

'That was you? Who came in later on?' Steve eyed him suspiciously, 'What would you be doing here that late?'

'Right back at you,' Billy grinned, 'also, what happened to you? You look like you crashed your car against a tree! Is that why you are here?'

'No, stupid, I just –' Steve interrupted himself.

Just like that the guards were back up completely, not anymore halfway lowered. The song went on without either of them moving, Steve still fixated Billy like the other one could lash out at any moment. He couldn't blame him for it.

'Listen,' Billy started again, but Steve turned around and walked towards the booths.

Billy looked after him, a strange feeling pooling in his stomach. He couldn't remember ever having felt helpless in front of someone he was interested in, and yet – Steve left him at a loss for words that could only be compensated with snide remarks and sleazy looks. He watched as Steve got his empty cup from his booth. His jacket was nothing more than rags but somehow Steve still managed to pull it off. Billy sighed to himself, prepared to see Steve leave. After all they had gone through, how could he expect that one dance and another stolen song changed things immediately?

The silence was back. With the song ending for the second time it had left his head to the empty loneliness. Billy appearing just as his brain felt like he had all the funny thoughts shaken out of it had reversed it all. He could still hear the chorus in his head, but now there was Billy.

Steve remembered the thought that had crossed his mind earlier, that the other customer was most likely another lost soul. Billy Hargrove wasn't what Steve called a lost soul, except that Billy was split in several characters. There was basketball and school Billy, the loud, obnoxious asshole that loved to joke about Steve or whoever he could make feel small and worthless. He hated that guy with all he could muster up. Then, there was crazy Billy. He had clashed with that one at the Byers' and he all but feared him for what his tempers and mood swings could mean for him.

There was another Billy, a third one, and Steve did not know much about him. He stayed hidden most of the time, as if he feared showing himself. The only times Steve had got to see him had been in his car, when he thought no one was watching. Once, he had waited for the party, and presumably, Billy had waited for Max. Steve didn't

know for sure but he thought he might have seen Billy Hargrove sobbing into the denim sleeve of his jacket. Another time he had caught him listening to some pop music, mouthing along the soft lyrics.

And then, there was this, a Billy Hargrove that approached him with seemingly no anger bubbling below the surface, a grin and an offer. What was Steve Harrington supposed to do with a person that made him feel small most of the time, but that seemed intriguing and interesting at the same time?

Steve got his mug, hesitated for a moment – there were two possibilities for him to follow – and sat down in Billy's booth. He could hear the soft sound of a gasp behind his back, he turned around and looked Billy in the eye, just as he had done with the Demodogs earlier; well, he had looked into their dark, toothy throats.

'I thought you wanted to dance? Well, I don't go around handing out dances to just anyone,' Steve saw Billy's jaw hit the floor and grinned, proud of himself for deciding to give it a chance.

After all, he reminded himself, he faced Demodogs almost regularly; he could take Billy Hargrove, if he decided to come at him, riled up as he was. His dance break had left his head buzzing and his limbs shaken, but he still felt the tension in his muscles. Steve scooted over as Billy approached, sinking into the cushioned corner of the booth. He waved the waitress closer to refill their cups, took a sip and sat back.

They looked at each other for a couple of minutes, both of them assessing the situation. Then, just as Steve began thinking about a possible topic to talk about, Billy cleared his throat.

'So, what *does* bring you to this diner at this hour in your state? You look like you killed someone,' he was joking, Steve knew that, but it was all too close to home for him.

'Maybe I did. This place is pretty secluded, I might get my kicks out of clubbing lonely late night drivers to death right outside,' he made sure to throw a weak smile in there as well, just to be sure.

Billy laughed, too loud and amused to be reacting to just Steve's lame attempt at being both creepy and funny. He looked at him and didn't avert his eyes when Steve met them. The looking at each other turned into looking each other in the eye, trying to figure the other one out.

'So, you listen to Foreigner?' Billy scratched the back of his neck, stretching to the point that his shirt rode up and exposed his belly.

'That song is pretty motivational,' Steve evaded the direct answer.

'Well, I like it as well. And it fits you, I guess,' Billy shrugged and sipped his coffee, looking around the diner, 'You do have the stars in your eyes, after all.'

He heard Steve choke more than he saw it. When he turned back to face Steve, he had turned bright red and wiped at the front of the jacket.

'Now that one is ruined,' he mumbled, prompting Billy to snort out a laugh.

'You are wearing a jacket that has been literally torn to pieces, but it is the coffee stains that ruin it? I'll never get you!'

'Are you trying to? Are you flirting with me, Billy Hargrove?'

Steve's eyes were sparkling, paralyzing Billy for a second in his seat. It took him a moment to realize that Steve was allowing him to see the stars in his eyes. He had wanted to see them for so long, he had been close to asking Nancy to describe them to him, he had almost burst out in the middle of the hallway, when everyone had expected to talk down on Steve, asking him to look at him just once like he did at everyone who was important to him. He had imagined them for so long, hoping to get to see them just once.

He wasn't prepared for it.

Steve's big, brown eyes lit up, surveying him closely with a warmth Billy didn't know how to counter. They kept him pinned to his place,

mesmerizing him beyond what he could understand. He seemed to shine from the inside out, blinding Billy and leaving him breathless. He didn't find words to describe it but it filled him with warmth and the satisfaction of having earned it.

'Worth it,' he smiled like crazy, knowing he looked like a madman, 'you really have the stars in your eyes.'

'What are you talking about?' Steve laughed and shook his head, disheveling his hair until a few strands fell into his eyes.

Billy grinned even wider, 'Your eyes glisten in a special way when you are...when you are with people you like. I hadn't seen it until today, only heard fairy tales about the stars that shine in Hawkins. Even Carol is gushing over it.'

'Billy Hargrove! You are flirting,' Steve laughed and raked his fingers through his hair in the attempt to cover his face.

'With you, Harrington, that is the crucial point. I am flirting with you,' Billy leaned forward just a bit, licking his lips, dragging his tongue over his mouth with the diligence of a clockwork.

Again, Steve spluttered. His cheeks turned even pinker, his eyes watered and a wheezing cough escaped his throat. Billy felt the satisfaction of having unsettled Steve enough to see the beautiful blush on his cheeks, and the bashful look in his dark eyes.

'But if you mean it -' Steve smiled at him and cleared his throat, 'what about that dance?'

With this he managed to shut Billy up for good. All of a sudden, his mouth had gone dry and for just a moment he thought he knew how a fish out of water felt. Words seemed to have disappeared from his mind, all he managed was an incoherent sound that was supposed to convey his approval.

Steve got up and paid for their coffee, the bored waitress handed him his change and popped her bubble gum into his face. He turned around, expecting to see Billy still in the booth. Yawning void stared

back at him.

‘He left,’ the girl yawned and threw him a challenging look, ‘have a nice evening.’

Steve stopped himself from saying ‘It’s three am,’ and walked out of the diner. Billy sat on the hood of his Camaro, a cigarette between his lips, smiling at him as if he had hung the sun.

‘There you are,’ he lit up the cigarette and took a drag, ‘now, how should we do this?’

Steve grinned, feeling a surge of daringness. He stepped closer to Billy, leaned back against the Camaro and looked at him. Billy met his gaze and smiled. For a moment, on the hood of the Camaro, he rested his head against Billy’s shoulder.

‘We can drive up to the quarry. And on the way I want you to think about what tapes you have in your car, I will try and remember all the tapes I have, and then, by the time we get to the quarry, we can decide what we will dance to.’

A warm draught ghosted over his neck. Billy had turned his head towards him, breathing gently, as to not disturb him. His eyes were shining in the darkness, one of his arms snaked its way around his waist, pulling him closer for a moment. Steve allowed himself to melt against the curve of the body pressing against his, just for a moment, whilst the stars glistened at the sky over them.

‘Right, dancing,’ Billy jumped off the car, staggering Steve into tumbling off as well, ‘we should go sometime soon, before the sun rises again.’

Steve willed himself to remain calm, countering Billy’s roaring laughter with collected silence. He walked over to his car, opened the driver’s door, and bent over to look through the tapes on the other side. The tingling sensation he felt on his back told him that Billy was looking at him again, and by all means, he should.

‘See you at the quarry,’ he yelled back at Billy before sliding into his seat and starting the engine.

His face was warm. Knowing that Billy had not been able to help himself back there had him feel like he maybe hadn't made a wrong decision for the first time in months. This Billy seemed worth getting to know him closer. The strange sensation in his stomach pooled again, making him shiver.

The dark woods along the road surrounded him completely, he drove along in silence, refraining from playing the tape Dustin had given him for their rides. There had been something in the air surrounding Billy, the promise of never seen before things to happen. Steve wanted to know, he wanted to feel it. In a remote corner of his mind he thought about the possibility of Billy being what he needed. A fresh start, for both of them, if he understood correctly.

He liked the idea. He liked the possibility to have someone to confide himself to, someone who would look at him and see something special. He liked to imagine taking care of someone, and being cared for. He wanted to explore Billy's motives, learn what made him switch, what made him feel safe and comfortable.

He liked the idea of Billy Hargrove in his life, for as much as both of them could give.

Billy drove more careful than he would have usually, but the darkness made it hard to see and he wasn't willing to take the risk. Not with the prospect of Steve Harrington waiting for a dance with him down the road. It was only because of his careful driving that he caught sight of Steve trying to scrub the dried blood and goo off his face with the help of a paper towel and a water bottle.

'Leave it, you look badass like that,' he bent down to grin through Steve's window.

'Jesus, Billy!'

Steve got out of the car, leaving the door ajar. Billy looked at him and felt the sense of well-being spread through his body. The need to cross his arms to keep it inside, to restrain himself, grew rampant. Steve crossed his arms over his chest, too, but he shivered a bit and

Billy wondered if it was just the night air hitting his body through the torn jacket.

‘What did you come up with in the car?’ Steve met his challenging look with an easy smile, ‘I offer Journey, Foreigner or Prince.’

‘I see your Prince,’ Billy stepped even closer, until their elbows nearly touched, ‘and I raise you Twisted Sister and Nazareth.’

‘Isn’t Twisted Sister one of your shrieking bands that drives Max away faster than you want her?’

Billy panted with indignation, ‘Do you think you cannot dance to my music?’

‘Billy, you call jumping in circles, mostly undressed, dancing!’

He saw the sparkle in Steve’s eyes, there was a silent demand for him to prove him wrong. The stars were burning up again, the heat in them surprised Billy and kept him under its spell. His fingers wanted to reach out, touch Steve’s face, stroke his cheeks, hold onto his hair, and destroy the perfect waves they had been put into.

‘What, cat got your tongue? I owe you a dance and I don’t like being indebted to anyone,’ Steve turned back to his car and got a tape from the cassette holder, ‘here, you play it. Your speakers have more power.’

Billy took the tape and glanced at it, ‘You really want to dance to Journey?’

‘Are you chickening out?’

Billy reeled the tape to play the song he had in mind, hoping that the order of the songs was as precise as Steve’s neat handwriting on the cover suggested. He wasn’t disappointed. The soft piano tune blasted from his car. With the first words he turned back around to face Steve who seemed to have forgotten how to move all of a sudden.

The sudden wave of affection that washed over him, surprised Billy, all he could do to satisfy his raging mind was to take Steve’s hands, moving one to his shoulder. Steve looked at him as if he saw him for

the first time again. Billy pressed into Steve a bit, making them move and take the first step together.

He felt Steve's warm body against his, moving in time with the music, breathing maybe a bit too erratic to convince him that Steve was left cold by it all. Billy felt his own breathing stagger. To distract himself from the urge to squeeze the other boy tight and rest his head on Steve's shoulder he began to hum along with the melody, trying to remember a song he had heard last before leaving California.

'Who would have thought,' Steve mumbled more into his neck than to his face, 'Billy Hargrove is a hell of a slow dancer?'

Despite it all, despite appearances, despite not even knowing where to go from this moment, Billy smiled and gave in. He pressed himself closer to Steve, holding him around the waist. Steve moved his hands to connect behind his neck.

While Steve Perry sang of strangers falling in love and lovers rediscovering themselves, Steve's smile blinded him to the point that Billy could not remember why he had come out in the first place. A giggle bubbled over Steve's lips, to be heard clearly over the music. He felt him close enough to dare leaning in until his lips brushed against Steve's ear.

'What has you tittering, pretty boy?' He hadn't intended for this to come out as sleazy as it did, but when he looked into Steve's eyes and the deep laugh lines around them, his head was emptied and all that was left to say was something lewd enough to make Steve blush.

Steve met his look, 'We are dancing as if we were at the Snow Ball and doing it for the first time.'

'I do not object to that. And we are doing good. Who would have thought it would be so easy, right? There are so many first times, and nothing to be outdone.'

'You're not making sense,' Steve growled, 'now, shut up and dance with me.'

Billy grinned at him, 'I am, okay? I am dancing with you in my arms

to Journey, what else could you possibly want?’

Steve’s answer was pushing his lips to Billy’s, sucking on them as soon as they connected. He surprised Billy, who felt something explode in his stomach that had him close his eyes to hide whatever emotion slipped into his expression, because he *knew*.

He knew that his eyes were talking more than he himself could ever say out loud. That Steve, up close and literally in his face, left him paralyzed and breathless, that he did not know where his usual confidence had disappeared to, and that he didn’t want to leave Steve’s presence again. He had to fight the urge to bite his lip, because right then and there his lip was occupied with *Steve*, but he also had to keep in the moan that lingered just beyond his teeth, strangling him from inside.

The kiss ended too soon for his liking with Steve stepping away, gnawing on his bottom lip. The next song had started, guitar riffs harder than the ones they had danced to. Billy looked up, taking in Steve’s flushed face and heaving chest, knowing that he looked the exact same. The music blaring from the Camaro surged through Billy’s veins, making him feel too much at once.

He decided that he had not yet processed what had happened, so he plucked up the courage to step up to Steve, his best predatory grin on his face, because how else could he approach this boy? He had to hide the looming feeling of having dreamt it all, that he could still be wrong about it. Like this, the sleazy looks were the go-to resolution. He grabbed Steve’s shirt at the front, looked into his eyes with what he hoped showed determination, and pulled him closer.

‘Just to be clear, pretty boy, this is confirmation,’ he didn’t allow Steve to answer.

Instead, he kissed him. He pressed Steve against the car in his back, moving into his personal space and crowding him up against the tail. With his arms snaked around Steve’s hips, he helped the other one up until he was perched up on the bootlid, his arms wrapped around Billy’s shoulders. Through it all Billy had managed to keep the kiss up, moving against Steve’s lips and pushing up into his mouth.

'Billy,' Steve groaned and moved his hands to tangle his fingers in his hair, 'you have to be joking...is that what kissing you feels like every time?'

'I've never had complaints,' Billy rested his forehead against Steve's, closing his eyes to calm down a bit, something he could not do with Steve right in front of him.

A warm giggle drifted to his ear, and he wanted to do nothing more than kiss Steve again, take in the curve of his smiling mouth, and feel it on his own lips. With Steve's hands in his hair and his head resting against his he realized that he was at peace. He was at peace in Steve's presence.

'You know,' he sounded softer than intended, and another Billy would have snarled at him for the softness, 'I guess you are my personal Jukebox Hero. Thank you for letting me see the stars.'

'Now, now,' Steve smirked at him, 'this is the moment you go sappy on me?'

He leaned back a moment, proceeding to pull Billy up onto the car next to him, before resting his head against Billy's shoulder, 'You can go sappy on me as much as you want, just promise me one thing!'

'What would that be?'

Steve turned his head to look at him, his dark eyes shining like the sun in the night around them, 'Take me out here again. And next time, let's dance to Twisted Sister.'

Billy didn't respond. He looked out onto the quarry, took in the moonlight on the water, and took in the soft rustling of the trees around them. He took in Steve's bloodied face and the way his fingers fidgeted nervously. He saw that Steve still shivered in his torn jacket and moved closer, enveloping him in his own.

'Anyway you want it,' Billy mumbled and pressed a kiss to Steve's temple, 'Anyway you want it, anyway you need it.'